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25 September 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing for House Committee on Foreign Affairs on
India

1. On 25 September 1984, the Subcommittees on Asian and Pacific Affairs and on Human Rights and International Organizations of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs were briefed on conflict between the Indian Sikh community and the Indian government. Present from the Foreign Affairs Committee were:

Stephen J. Solarz (D., NY), co-chairman
Gus Yatron (D., PA), co-chairman
Mervyn M. Dymally (D., CA)
Mel Levine (D., CA)

Benjamin A. Gilman (R., NY)
Joel Pritchard (R., WA)
Gerald B.H. Solomon (R., NY)

Also attending were:

Jim Slattery (D., KA)
Victor H. Fazio (D., CA)

The briefers were:

Graham Fuller, National Intelligence Officer/Near East
South Asia

[redacted] CIA/Office of Near Eastern and South Asian
Affairs

George Harris, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR),
Department of State

Also attending were [redacted]

[redacted] from the Defense Intelligence Agency and Eliza
Van Hollen, Peter Thompson, and Elizabeth Bowen from the
State Department. A transcript was taken. (C)

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2. The briefing opened with an explanation from Mr. Fuller that CIA and INR had divided the 15 questions that the Committee wanted to be briefed on and would provide oral summaries before responding to additional questions from the members present at the briefing. [] then proceeded to briefly outline the key factors behind the outbreak of violence between the Sikhs and the Indian government. She described the size of the Sikh population, the Sikh Akali Dal Party, the emergence of fundamentalist leaders--most notably Sant Bhindranwale--, the escalation of violence in Punjab state, and the Army assault on the sacred Golden Temple in Amritsar in June 1984. Sikh grievances against the central government were discussed along with New Delhi's position and response and charges that the government has discriminated against Sikhs. With regard to alleged Pakistani and US involvement in the conflict, the Committee was told that the US intelligence community has no evidence to confirm a Pakistani government role, and that unfounded charges of US involvement repeatedly surface in India, due partly to Soviet propaganda efforts. (C)

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3. The segment of the briefing covered by Mr. Harris included more information about the Sikh terrorist movement led by Sant Bhindranwale, the Sikh movement for greater autonomy, the assault on the Golden Temple, and the prospects for a political settlement. Mr. Harris also discussed support to Sikhs in India from Sikh expatriates. (C)

4. The remainder of the briefing was consumed by a question and answer period. Members' questions focused on the validity of numerous accusations against the Indian government by Sikhs living in the US. Mr. Thompson of the State Department informed the Committee that this was an inopportune time for the US to get involved because New Delhi and the Sikhs were entering into sensitive negotiations and India was also nearing national elections in which Prime Minister Gandhi's opponents, including the Sikhs, could do well at the polls. The briefing ended with no follow-up matters and a note of appreciation to the briefers from Congressman Solarz. (C)

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